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THE MAGIC SWORD

EPISODE I

## A PAGEANT OF CHIVALRY

BY LUCY DICKSON

THE great enthusiasm over the English pageants of the last few years has suggested some very interesting experiments with the pageant as a school festival, one of which was tried in Indianapolis during the past winter, the pupils of the Manual Training High School of that city presenting a "Pageant of Chivalry," in commemoration of the Tennyson centenary.

A pageant has this distinct advantage over the more familiar forms of school festivals—it is the pupils' own expression of themselves. First they must know thoroughly the theme of the pageant; then they must put into dramatic form the new ideas they have conceived, and, finally, they must play the parts they have created. Thus it is the inspiration and

means for developing power in the pupils and an opportunity for dramatic expression of the highest kind.

The celebration in Indianapolis was undertaken solely for its educational value, and, though not allowed to interfere with regular class work, served as an inspiration and larger opportunity for the pupils to express themselves through their various activities. The plan of organization was interesting. The English classes wrote the episodes. From Malory's "Morte d' Arthur," Tennyson's "Idylls of the King," and Howard Pyle's "Story of King Arthur and His Knights," as the chief sources, they gathered their ideas of the age of chivalry. The Tennyson classes had, in addition to their study of the "Idylls of the King," this tremen-



LAUNCELOT AND GUINEVERE

EPISODE II

dously interesting research work as a background for the poems and the constructive work of the pageant as composition. Thus, in a very real sense, the pageant merely provided a motive for the regular class work.

The six episodes were written as class exercises. Four of them were in blank verse. The Art Department supervised the designs and color scheme for the curtain, costumes, shields, and heralds' banners, in fact all that pertained to the spectacular presentation. The costumes were made in the sewing department, and shields, swords, and spurs were made in the manual training department.

The dramatic presentation was as simple as possible. The prologues and six episodes, announced by heralds and trumpeters, followed each other without intermission. The players passed freely in and out through the audience. The curtain, done all in soft tones of blue

and green, showed the dim outlines of a landscape with a feudal castle fading away in the distance. Before this background, suggestive of the shadow world from which they came, the quaint figures of Arthurian legend lived again the golden days of chivalry.

First came Merlin in the prologue, promising to show upon the mystic curtain "many a spectacle of pages, heralds, knights, and ladies."

Episode I represented "The Coming of Arthur." The Archbishop and the kings, Lot, Mark, and Leodogrance, came to the trial of the magic sword, which none but the rightful king might draw forth from the anvil. When it was seen that the true king was not among them the young Arthur came and drew the sword and as he drew it forth a bright light flashed from the anvil, showing that he was indeed the chosen king.

Episode II showed how Launcelot

brought Guinevere to Camelot and how Arthur, vowing to love her to the death, took her to reign with him. Perhaps the most beautiful moment in the pageant was the crowning of Guinevere amid the blowing of trumpets and the waving of May branches. Launcelot and Guinevere, followed by a long train of pages and ladies carrying May blossoms, came to the court. Arthur, meeting her, said: "Behold, thy doom is mine!" and the Archbishop, placing the crown upon her head, said: "Reign ye and live and love and make the world other." Then Arthur, drawing his knights about him, swore them to the sacred vows of the Table Round, and the knights, lifting high their swords, sang:

"Blow trumpet, for the world is white with May!  
Blow trumpet, the long night hath roll'd away!  
Blow thro' the living world—  
Let the King reign!

\* \* \* \* \*

Fall battle-axe and flash brand!

Let the king reign!"

Episode III, based on "Gareth and Lynette," showed how Arthur dispensed justice in his court and how Gareth obtained his quest.

For Episode IV the classes reading "Ivanhoe," "Marmion," and Howard Pyle's "Men of Iron" worked out in dramatic form the ceremony of the knighting of Galahad. It showed rather effectively what a very solemn thing the ceremony of bestowing knighthood was and how very seriously the knights took their knighthood and its obligations. Some of the interesting details of this episode were: Galahad's night-long watch with his armor while the priest and the chandler slept; the entrance of the nuns singing their Latin chant at midnight and Galahad's orison; Galahad's presentation of the lighted candle and the sovereign at the altar at dawn; King Arthur's discussion of the solemn obligations of knighthood; the buckling of swords and spurs and the giving of the accolade.

Episode V presented a charming picture of the queen's bower. The queen sang to the music of the lute, her maids danced and the jester and pages made merry until a trumpet announced the ap-

proach of Arthur and his knights. Arthur entered with his knights and Gareth just returned victorious from his first quest in which he overthrew "Sir Morning Star, Noonday, and Evening Star." The Queen crowned Gareth with a chaplet of oak leaves and finally all was interrupted by the nuns who entered bearing Elaine, the lily-maid of Astalot, who came thus to take her last farewell of Launcelot.

In Episode VI the knights, having seen the vision of the grail, vowed to ride in quest of it. Arthur, returning to find his knights filled with the desire to seek the grail, mourned the breaking up of his loved "Table Round" and urged that knightly service to the oppressed is a higher thing than the pursuit of a vision but bade them keep their vows and summoned the court to assemble at once in the cathedral for a farewell service. Then followed the pageant recessional in which knights and ladies, nuns, priests, and pages, eighty or more in all, joining in the march to the cathedral, passed through the audience and down the long corridor, singing now loud, now faint and far away:

Now worship we the Eternal Lord of might  
His folk are we; our deeds are in His sight.  
His truth shall be our sword, His strength our shield

Before His power His foes shall ever yield.  
Rejoice! rejoice! He guards His children well;  
Beneath His hand His folk securely dwell!

'Gainst wrong without; 'gainst evil thought within

We steadfast strive—the battle sore to win.  
The powers of evil lure and speak us fair  
We vanquish them by vigil and by prayer.  
Rejoice! Rejoice! He guards His children well;  
Beneath His hand His folk securely dwell!

Our loyal service yield we God above,  
Who fills the earth with largess of His love:  
With fruits and blossoms fair for our delight,  
With moon and stars to make the heavens bright.

Rejoice! Rejoice! He guards His children well;  
Beneath His hand His folk securely dwell!

The music for the overture and the "Knights' Hymn" was composed, in imitation of the music of chivalry, by Mr. Philip H. Goepp, for this pageant.